



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
September 20, 2011**

I. Call to Order & Introductions: Bill Gray, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Bill asked for all present to stand for a moment of silence for all of those who have given their lives and those who have been wounded for our country in the different conflicts in which our country has been engaged and to remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Approval of Minutes: Mike Subin, Commissioner, made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Rich Fales, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the June Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. 100,000 Homes Campaign – A Partnership with Bethesda Cares – John Mendez and Susan Kirk of Bethesda Cares

Bethesda Cares is partnering with Common Ground's [100,000 Homes Campaign](#), a grassroots effort to find and place the most vulnerable, long-term homeless individuals into 100,000 households across the country by July 2013. Common Ground's ground-breaking Street to Home program reduced street homelessness by 87% in the 20-block Times Square neighborhood, and by 43% in the surrounding 230 blocks of West Midtown.

Bethesda Cares, with support from Bethesda area volunteers and community leaders, is planning a weeklong effort to identify and help persons who are homeless obtain and sustain permanent housing. The goal of Bethesda Registry Week is to create a by-name registry of people living on the streets in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase area, giving priority to those who have been out there the longest and who are the most vulnerable. The advantage of this outreach initiative is that housing the most vulnerable and medically needy individuals first will reduce the overall cost to the community. In many cases, permanent housing can be a lifesaving solution for the chronically homeless.

To ensure the most accurate count possible, volunteers will survey the individuals about their medical needs during the early morning hours for three consecutive days starting November 3rd. The survey findings will be presented to the community at the conclusion of Bethesda's Registry Week on Monday, November 14th. Bethesda Cares is recruiting volunteers to canvass Bethesda's streets to survey the city's most vulnerable homeless individuals and families. Interested individuals can email volunteer@bethesdacares.org. Paula Matuskey, Commissioner, will share the volunteer request with her Student Life Directors as a possible Student Service Learning opportunity for Montgomery College students.

Bethesda Cares is also accepting monetary donations to help pay for rent, security deposits and move-in funds.

John Mendez has already begun to pinpoint the areas in Bethesda all the way down to the District of Columbia line where homeless people currently live. During the blizzard in January,

2011, John found 57 people living on the streets in Bethesda. Recently, he found approximately 8 homeless individuals living around the Friendship Heights area. John will develop maps for the volunteer teams to use when conducting the survey. Volunteers will give out goodie bags that will contain meal cards, clean socks, bottled water, information, and more. Photos of individuals who have signed a release form will be taken to help identify them later on as sometimes it can take up to three months to obtain housing as well as provide before and after shots. Bethesda Cares will work with Montgomery County housing providers, like the Housing Opportunities Commission, and work with Ken Barnum, VA Homeless Outreach Coordinator, to obtain housing prior to Registry Week. If the Bethesda Registry Week is successful in Bethesda, it will be implemented in other cities such as Silver Spring and Rockville.

John noted that the 50 HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers that the County has received over the past two years thanks to the advocacy efforts of CVA and Congressman Van Hollen will bring between \$12M and \$15M Federal housing dollars into Montgomery County if those veterans live for another 15 years.

The Coalition of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans and National Alliance on Mental Illness are national partners. The West Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Panel has shown support for this initiative. John Mendez asked for the CVA to be supportive of this initiative as well.

Please see Bethesda Patch article: [“Bethesda Cares: Most Vulnerable Homeless Should Be Housed First”](#).

IV. “Respect the Space” Accessible Parking Enforcement Campaign

Mike Subin, Commissioner, reported that County Executive Isiah Leggett received a letter from the Commission on People with Disabilities, supported by the Commission on Health, addressing the issues of accessible parking abuse in Montgomery County. Mike was tasked with creating a Committee to address violations of accessible parking spaces and abuse of disability parking placards by able-bodied individuals. He has involved Capt. Tom Didone, Montgomery County Police, Rick Siebert, Chief, Management Services & Property Development Section, Department of Transportation, Division of Parking Management, Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison, Commission on People with Disabilities (CPWD) and Dr. Seth Morgan, Commissioner, CPWD.

Lucille Baur, Office of Public Information and Staff Liaison to the Department of Police, was asked by Mike Subin to develop a campaign to educate the public about the importance of accessible parking for individuals with disabilities and leaving the spaces available for those that really need them. The campaign will also educate individuals about the importance of disability placards being used by the person who has the disability and that they should not be shared. The concept of the campaign, “Respect the Space”, is to show respect for those who need the spaces. Lucille is developing a Public Service Announcement (PSA) and is interested in featuring a veteran with a disability. County Executive Leggett will hold a press conference to unveil the “Respect the Space” campaign. There will be opportunities for Commissioners to become involved with the campaign as the County surveys parking lots and spaces to ensure they are adequately signed and marked as well as assesses accessible parking being available to those who need it. Capt. Didone will be developing an accessible parking manual for volunteers to use when inspecting spaces.

V. Update on Veterans Collaborative – Rich Schiffauer, Commissioner

Rich Schiffauer, Commissioner, reported that the Memorandum of Understanding is still being reviewed by the County Attorney’s Office. Once it has been approved it will be sent back to the VA and services can begin at the Piccard Office. The Veterans Collaborative along with the

CVA is hosting a [Military Servicemembers and Veterans Resource Fair](#) to be held on Saturday, November 5th from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at White Flint Mall. The Resource Fair is open to active duty military personnel, guards and reservists, veterans and their family members. Agencies interested in having a table at the fair can contact Rich for a registration form: 240-777-1724 or e-mail Richard.Schiffauer@montgomerycountymd.gov.

The Veterans Collaborative is also drafting a veterans community survey to seek input from veterans, military servicemembers, and their families about the services they really want and need. Once the survey has been finalized a Committee will work on who to send the survey to and how to get it out to the community.

VI. Chair and Vice Chair Report – Bill Gray and Jerry Godwin

Bill Gray and Mike Subin attended a 100th birthday celebration for Col. Robert C. Strauss, where they presented a proclamation on behalf of County Executive Isiah Leggett.

Jerry Godwin, Chair of the Maryland Hispanic Business Conference, hosted the 10th Annual Maryland Hispanic Business Conference on September 6th. The conference included a variety of workshops, training and business sessions that explore how to promote business relationships.

The Department of Health and Human Services will be hosting a Homeless Resource Day on October 19th from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Bohrer Park in Gaithersburg. The CVA will have a table along with the Aging and Disability Resource Unit. Commissioners are invited to help staff it. Rich Schiffauer, Commissioner, volunteered to do the morning shift.

The third annual Bubba's Belly Run will be held on September 25th. Bubba's Belly Run is a 501(c)(3) organization held in honor of Captain Brian "Bubba" Bunting, who was killed while serving in Afghanistan in February 2009. All proceeds go directly towards supporting the families of the fallen.

The Veterans Day Planning Workgroup has met twice to develop a program for the celebration of Veterans Day and the dedication and unveiling of the Veterans artwork on Friday, November 11th at 11:00 a.m. at the Silver Spring Civic Building. County Executive Isiah Leggett will present a Veterans Day proclamation and Captain Jack Hewitt, U.S. Army (Ret.) WWII Veteran, will give a speech about the Silver Spring Armory being torn down and what it means to dedicate the Silver Spring Veterans Plaza. Jack and five of his brothers served in WWII, his other brother served in Korea, and his father served in WWI. The artwork designed by artist Toby Mendez will also be unveiled by veterans from all branches of the U.S. military. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) and U.S. Public Health Services (USPHS) have been added to the glass etchings in the artwork along with the five U.S. armed services branches. Alan Bowser will be hosting a veterans benefit concert in the evening. Tickets are \$20.00 with 50% of the proceeds being donated to a veterans service organization. The Commission will have input as to which organization will receive the donation. The workgroup will meet again on Thursday, October 13th from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Silver Spring Civic Building.

VII. Updates / Motions for Commission Action

The Commission needs to prepare its Top Two Policy Issues to be presented to the County Council on Thursday, October 6th. It was discussed that currently there is only a Veterans Service Officer (VSO) in Montgomery County twice a month for a total of six hours. Jane McCarthy, Commissioner, made a motion that the Commission recommend that there be a full-time VSO to serve the over 50,000 veterans that live in Montgomery County and to support

efforts to end homelessness in Montgomery County for veterans and their families. Carl Bedell, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved. It was noted that Gary Brown, VSO, has been replaced by Clayton Smith, VSO, at the MontgomeryWorks Wheaton Office. He is available to see veterans the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Bill Gray, Chair, appointed Commissioners Carl Bedell and Jane McCarthy to assist Betsy Luecking, Staff, with interviewing new Commission applicants.

VIII. Roundtable

Rich Fales, Commissioner, noted that Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has several grants available for veterans programs, including a grant to develop and expand behavioral health treatment courts that could be used to begin a pilot veterans treatment court in Montgomery County. Rich is contact with the grants office to see if funds are available for the current fiscal year (FY2012).

Ann Humphrey, Representation from Office of Congressman Chris Van Hollen, reported that Congressman Van Hollen is one of 12 members on the new congressional super committee charged with cutting the budget deficit by more than a trillion dollars over 10 years. Ann announced that the Department of Housing and Community Affairs is hosting a Free One-on-one Foreclosure Prevention Counseling workshop on Saturday, October 1st from 10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Bohrer Park Activity Center, Summit Hall Farm, 506 S. Frederick Avenue, Gaithersburg. Representatives from the Office of Congressman Chris Van Hollen will be present to help homeowners.

Adjournment: 7:30 p.m.

Next Full Commission Meeting:

Tuesday, October 18th, 2011, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville in the 1st Floor Tan Conference Room.

Respectively submitted:

Carly Clem, OSC

Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison